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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE <u>3</u> MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on *25 February 2004*.

2a)☐ This action is **FINAL**.   2b)☒ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) *1-15* is/are pending in the application.

    4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) *1-15* is/are rejected.

7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☒ The drawing(s) filed on *29 April 2004* is/are: a)☒ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

    Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

    Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

    a)☐ All   b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

      1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

      2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

      3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

    * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)

2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)

3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date *02/25/2004*.

4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ .

5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application

6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Independent **claim 15** is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter.

Claim 15 specifies a signal bearing medium embodying a program of machine-readable instructions. The signal bearing medium is further disclosed to include transmission media such as digital and analog communication links and wireless (in paragraph 0138). Transmission media such as digital and analog communication links and wireless signals are non-statutory subject matter. This subject matter is not limited to that which falls within a statutory category of invention because it is not limited to a process, machine, manufacture, or a composition of matter. Instead, it includes a form of energy. Energy does not fall within a statutory category since it is clearly not a series of steps or acts to constitute a process, not a mechanical device or combination of mechanical devices to constitute a machine, not a tangible physical article or object which is some form of matter to be a product and constitute a manufacture, and not a composition of two or more substances to constitute a composition of matter.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that

form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claim 14 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by **Kamata et al. (US Patent Publication # 5,953,050).**

Consider **claim 14**, Kamata et al. show and disclose a service comprising at

least one of:

conducting an online meeting in which any or all nodes participating in said online

meeting receives a composite image of said online meeting that is potentially

customized for each said node (Abstract and column 1, lines 21-27 which disclose that

the claimed service provides support for conducting an online meeting in which the

system allows each participant to watch other participants he or she wants to watch in a

desired array of a composite image (example shown in Fig. 2A), thereby disclosing

potential customization for each node);

operating one of said nodes in said online meeting in which said customized composite

images are possible (Abstract and column 1, lines 13-35 that further disclose image

reduction means for the speaker and non-speaker terminals, image storage and image

readout control units that display a plurality of reduced images on one display screen,

and an image selecting and combining unit for generating a customized composite

image and outputting it to receiving terminals);

calculating a composite image in said online meeting (Abstract that discloses a video

conferencing system that generates a composite image of the conference participants

and displays the image on the receiving terminals, customized to each participant's

specification (layout based rules); Figs. 3 and 7 that show different components of the

system for image reduction, composite image creation, and image display units, etc.;

column 1, lines 56-65 disclose multiple CODECs being used to calculate sizes for

different image components of the composite image; Fig. 8 that shows a sample

composite image for a select participant's specifications; column 1, lines 21-35 disclose

an example of customization of the composite image based on participant # 6 being the

speaker; column 2, lines 31-41 disclose some additional rules used during creation of

the composite image).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all
obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth
in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior
art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was
made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall
not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham* v. *John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148

USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining

obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

 1.   Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
 2.   Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
 3.   Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
 4.   Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating
       obviousness
       or nonobviousness.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of

the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of

the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein

were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation

under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was

not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to

consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g)

prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Claims 1, 2 and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable

over **Van Dok et al. (US Patent Application Publication # 2004/0162877 A1)** in view

of **Digate et al. (US Patent Application Publication # 2004/0161090 A1).**

Consider **claim 1**, Van Dok et al. show and disclose a method of providing a

composite data feed for an online meeting (Abstract that discloses a real-time online

communications such as instant messaging with enhancements that provide composite

data feed; Fig. 2B shows such a composite display 222 (After) between two users;

paragraphs 0044-0048 describe the details of the method), said method comprising at

least one of:

providing a capability for at least one participant node in said online meeting to input a

layout rule for a customized composite image of said online meeting to be seen

specifically at said at least one participant node (Figs 2B and 5A that show a capability

provided at one participant (Bryan) to display the incoming messages from another

participant (Kurt) in bold font and his own messages in indented italic font; Fig. 5A that

additionally shows an extensible emoticon (☺) replacing a textual representation in the

incoming message on Bryan's display, thereby disclosing a customized composite

image of the online meeting; paragraph 0048, lines 13-18 which disclose that either

default formatting or user's personally selected representative formatting may be used

for the customized composite image displayed, thereby disclosing the use of a layout

rule for at least one participant node).

However, Van Dok et al. do not specifically disclose receiving a layout rule

defining a composite image of said online meeting that can be customized for at least

one participant node in said online meeting.

In the same field of endeavor, Digate et al. disclose the claimed method,

including receiving a layout rule defining a composite image of said online meeting that

can be customized for at least one participant node in said online meeting (Abstract that

discloses a rules-based real-time messaging system that includes a rules engine, which

receives a layout rule for controlling the delivery of messages to users; Figs. 2, 7 and 9

show the relevant details of the disclosed method; paragraph 0040 which discloses that

the persistent database 15 (shown in Fig. 2) includes configuration data (interpreted to correspond to layout rules reflecting user preferences and group definitions) related to the delivery of messages to the participants; paragraphs 0062-0063 and 0102 disclose the same details).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to receive a layout rule defining a composite image of said online meeting that can be customized for at least one participant node in said online meeting, as taught by Digate et al., in the method of Van Dok et al., so that the composite image of an online meeting can be presented to the participants based on the layout rules customized to each participant's preferences and configuration.

Consider **claim 2,** and **as it applies to claim 1 above**, Van Dok et al., as modified by Digate et al., further disclose the claimed method, wherein said layout rule comprises a Boolean combination of conditions (in Digate et al. reference, Table of Fig. 9, disclosing a meeting being scheduled when a participant is online and the video is available, thereby disclosing a Boolean combination of conditions for a layout rule; paragraph 0062 and 0063 disclose additional details).

Consider **claim 15,** Van Dok et al. show and disclose a computer program product embodying a program of machine-readable instructions executable by a digital processing apparatus to perform a method of providing a composite data feed for an online meeting (claims 24-28; paragraph 0068 that discloses the details of the disclosed

computer program product; Abstract that discloses a real-time online communications

such as instant messaging with enhancements that provide composite data feed; Fig.

2B shows such a composite display 222 (After) between two users; paragraphs 0044-

0048 describe the details of the method), said method comprising at least one of:

providing a capability for at least one participant node in said online meeting to input a

layout rule for a customized composite image of said online meeting to be seen

specifically at said at least one participant node (Figs 2B and 5A that show a capability

provided at one participant (Bryan) to display the incoming messages from another

participant (Kurt) in bold font and his own messages in indented italic font; Fig. 5A that

additionally shows an extensible emoticon (☺) replacing a textual representation in the

incoming message on Bryan's display, thereby disclosing a customized composite

image of the online meeting; paragraph 0048, lines 13-18 which disclose that either

default formatting or user's personally selected representative formatting may be used

for the customized composite image displayed, thereby disclosing the use of a layout

rule for at least one participant node).

However, Van Dok et al. do not specifically disclose receiving a layout rule

defining a composite image of said online meeting that can be customized for at least

one participant node in said online meeting.

In the same field of endeavor, Digate et al. disclose the claimed computer

program product, including receiving a layout rule defining a composite image of said

online meeting that can be customized for at least one participant node in said online

meeting (claims 22-23; abstract that discloses a rules-based real-time messaging

system that includes a rules engine, which receives a layout rule for controlling the delivery of messages to users; Figs. 2, 7 and 9 show the relevant details of the disclosed method; paragraph 0040 which discloses that the persistent database 15 (shown in Fig. 2) includes configuration data (interpreted to correspond to layout rules reflecting user preferences and group definitions) related to the delivery of messages to the participants; paragraphs 0062-0063 and 0102 disclose the same details).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to receive a layout rule defining a composite image of said online meeting that can be customized for at least one participant node in said online meeting, as taught by Digate et al., in the computer program product of Van Dok et al., so that the composite image of an online meeting can be presented to the participants based on the layout rules customized to each participant's preferences and configuration.

Claims 3-7 and 9-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Van Dok et al. (US Patent Application Publication # 2004/0162877 A1)** in view of **Digate et al. (US Patent Application Publication # 2004/0161090 A1)** and further in view of **Kamata et al. (US Patent Publication # 5,953,050).**

Consider **claim 3,** and **as it applies to claim 1 above,** Van Dok et al., as modified by Digate et al., disclose the claimed method, further comprising:

receiving data feeds from a plurality of nodes included in said online meeting (in Van

Dok et al. reference, Fig. 2B showing composite image display of Bryan's (After) display

showing data feeds received from both Bryan's and Kurt's nodes).

However, Van Dok et al., as modified by Digate et al., do not specifically

disclose calculating a composite data feed image for said at least one participant node,

said composite data feed image complying with said layout rule.

In the same field of endeavor, Kamata et al. disclose the claimed method,

including calculating a composite data feed image for said at least one participant node,

said composite data feed image complying with said layout rule (Abstract that discloses

a video conferencing system that generates a composite image of the conference

participants and displays the image on the receiving terminals, customized to each

participant's specification (layout based rules); Figs. 3 and 7 that show different

components of the system for image reduction, composite image creation, and image

display units, etc.; column 1, lines 56-65 disclose multiple CODECs being used to

calculate sizes for different image components of the composite image; Fig. 8 that

shows a sample composite image for a select participant's specifications; column 1,

lines 21-35 disclose an example of customization of the composite image based on

participant # 6 being the speaker; column 2, lines 31-41 disclose some additional rules

used during creation of the composite image).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at

the time the invention was made to calculate a composite data feed image for said at

least one participant node, said composite data feed image complying with said layout

rule, as taught by Kamata et al., in the method of Van Dok et al., as modified by Digate et al., so that the composite image of an online meeting can be presented to the participants based on the layout rules customized to each participant's preferences and configuration.

Consider **claim 4,** and **as it applies to claim 1 above**, Van Dok et al., as modified by Digate et al. and Kamata et al., further disclose the claimed method, wherein said layout rule specifies at least one of:

a size of a display pane in said composite image of a given feed involved in said online meeting (in Van Dok et al. reference, Fig. 6A After blocks 604 that shows a dynamically sized pane to contain the text of an entire message, so that the user need not scroll in order to view the entire message; paragraph 0062 provides additional details);

a relative size of said display pane of said given feed (in Kamata et al. reference, Fig. 8 that shows relative sizes of different panes for various image feeds);

a position of said display pane of said given feed (in Kamata et al. reference, Fig. 9 that shows X and Y-Coordinates being determined from Hsync (horizontal) and Vsync (vertical) signals of video data of a display pane for a given feed; column 10, lines 14-46 disclose the process in more details);

a status of an owner of said given feed (in Digate et al. reference, paragraph 0012, lines 1-3 which disclose a rules-based real-time messaging system in which an availability status of users is maintained for each user); and

a type of said given feed (in Van Dok et al. reference, column 2, lines 38-41 which

disclose that each terminal is allowed to select an image from a terminal other than the

speaking end).

Consider **claim 5,** and **as it applies to claim 3 above**, Van Dok et al., as

modified by Digate et al. and Kamata et al., disclose the claimed method, further

comprising transmitting said composite data feed image for display on a display device

(in Kamata et al. reference, column 3, lines 62-67 which disclose that a composite

image containing plurality of reduced images of the participants' environment is

displayed on a single display screen of a participant).

Consider **claim 6,** and **as it applies to claim 3 above**, Van Dok et al., as

modified by Digate et al. and Kamata et al., further disclose the claimed method,

wherein said calculating is accomplished at a server remote from said at least one

participant node (in Digate et al. reference, Fig. 1 that shows the Communication Server

18, the Messaging Server 14, and the Database Server 15 separated from the

Messaging Clients by Network 20; in Kamata et al. reference, Fig. 1 that shows a Multi-

Location Video Conferencing Control Unit 3 and a Multi-Image Combiner 4 performing

calculations for composite image, are remotely located (by ISDN Network 2) from the

participating Video Conferencing Terminals; column 1, lines 21-27 disclose the same

details).

Consider **claim 7, and as it applies to claim 3 above**, Van Dok et al., as

modified by Digate et al. and Kamata et al., further disclose the claimed method,

wherein said calculating is accomplished at one of said at least one participant node's

location (in Kamata et al. reference, Fig. 4 that shows an MCU 3 associated with a

Broadcasting Terminal A, performing calculations for image generation/transmission to

terminals B and C; column 2, lines 31-38 disclose the same details); and

a level of video activity, including at least one of an amount of overall movement and a

number of moving figures.

Consider **claim 9, and as it applies to claim 3 above**, Van Dok et al., as

modified by Digate et al. and Kamata et al., further disclose the claimed method,

wherein said calculating the data feed includes at least one of:

an amount of audio activity, including a number of different speakers (in Kamata et al.

reference, column 2, lines 31-38 which disclose that in order to determine which

participant is currently acting as a speaker, MCU3 (in Fig. 4) may detect the level of a

voice signal from each terminal to thereby determine the terminal having the maximum

voice level, thereby corresponding to the speaker); and

a level of video activity, including at least one of an amount of overall movement and a

number of moving figures.

Consider **claim 10, and as it applies to claim 3 above**, Van Dok et al., as

modified by Digate et al. and Kamata et al., disclose the claimed method, said method

further having at least one of the following capabilities:

said receiving of data feeds is from one or more distinct network types;

at least one node in said online meeting can serve as a data feed source (in Kamata et

al. reference, column 2, lines 38-41 which disclose that each terminal is allowed to

select an image from a terminal other than the speaking end, thereby disclosing that at

least one node in said online meeting can serve as a data feed source).

Claims 8 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable

over **Van Dok et al. (US Patent Application Publication # 2004/0162877 A1)** in view

of **Digate et al. (US Patent Application Publication # 2004/0161090 A1)** and further

in view of **Moran et al. (US Patent Publication 6,018,346).**

Consider **claim 8,** and **as it applies to claim 1 above**, Van Dok et al., as

modified by Digate et al., further disclose the claimed method, wherein said receiving

said layout rule is periodically checked so that said at least one participant node is able

to revise said layout rule until one of:

said at least one participant node exits said online meeting (in Digate et al. reference,

Table of Fig. 9, showing an example of the logical structure of rules that control the

operation of the rules engine; paragraph 0062, lines 18-28 which disclose events such

as the presence of various participants being monitored to indicate any changes in the

presence, and making corresponding changes in the composite images being

presented, thereby disclosing that the layout rule may be periodically checked for any revisions until at least one participant node exits said online meeting).

However, Van Dok et al., as modified by Digate et al., do not specifically disclose that said at least one participant node is able to revise said layout rule until said at least one participant node exits said online meeting.

In the same field of endeavor, Moran et al. disclose the claimed method, wherein said at least one participant node is able to revise said layout rule until said at least one participant node exits said online meeting (column 2, lines 27-45 which disclose a domain object class that defines attributes, a set of action rules and layouts, the attributes defining the data associated with the meeting domain object and the underlying attribute values capable of changes, based on user actions (e.g. via a gesture) performed on an icon representing an instance of the meeting domain object, or upon the occurrence of a system event (such as the presence of a participant), thereby disclosing that said at least one participant node is able to revise said layout rule until said at least one participant node exits said online meeting).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to allow said at least one participant node to revise said layout rule until said at least one participant node exits said online meeting, as taught by Moran et al., in the method of Van Dok et al., as modified by Digate et al., so as to provided added flexibility in presenting the composite image to the online meeting participants, based on the specific environment of the meeting.

Consider **claim 11**, Van Dok et al. show and disclose a method of providing a

composite data feed for an online meeting that can be seen uniquely at a participant

node(Abstract that discloses a real-time online communications such as instant

messaging with enhancements that provide composite data feed; Fig. 2B shows such a

composite display 222 (After) between two users; paragraphs 0044-0048 describe the

details of the method; Figs 2B and 5A that show a capability provided at one participant

(Bryan) to display the incoming messages from another participant (Kurt) in bold font

and his own messages in indented italic font; Fig. 5A that additionally shows an

extensible emoticon (☺) replacing a textual representation in the incoming message on

Bryan's display, thereby disclosing a customized composite image of the online meeting

at Bryan's display; paragraph 0048, lines 13-18 which disclose that either default

formatting or user's personally selected representative formatting may be used for the

customized composite image displayed, thereby disclosing the use of a customized

layout rule for at least one participant node).

However, Van Dok et al. do not specifically disclose calculating a composite

image of said online meeting that is to be seen uniquely at a participant node, wherein a

layout rule for said calculating said composite image can be dynamically changed

during a course of said online meeting.

In the same field of endeavor, Digate et al. disclose the claimed method,

including disclosing a layout rule for calculating a composite image (Abstract that

discloses a rules-based real-time messaging system that includes a rules engine, which

uses a layout rule to control the delivery of messages to users; Figs. 2, 7 and 9 show

the relevant details of the disclosed method; paragraph 0040 which discloses that the

persistent database 15 (shown in Fig. 2) includes configuration data (interpreted to

correspond to layout rules reflecting user preferences and group definitions) related to

the delivery of messages to the participants; paragraphs 0062-0063 and 0102 disclose

the same details).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at

the time the invention was made to use a layout rule to define a composite image of an

online meeting that can be customized for at least one participant node in said online

meeting, as taught by Digate et al., in the method of Van Dok et al., so that the

composite image of an online meeting can be presented to the participants based on

the layout rules customized to each participant's preferences and configuration.

However, Van Dok et al., as modified by Digate et al., do not specifically disclose

that a layout rule for calculating the composite image can be dynamically changed

during a course of said online meeting.

In the same field of endeavor, Moran et al. disclose the claimed method, wherein

a layout rule for calculating the composite image can be dynamically changed during a

course of said online meeting (column 2, lines 27-45 which disclose a domain object

class that defines attributes, a set of action rules and layouts, the attributes defining the

data associated with the meeting domain object and the underlying attribute values

capable of changes, based on user actions (e.g. via a gesture) performed on an icon

representing an instance of the meeting domain object, or upon the occurrence of a

system event, thereby disclosing that a layout rule for calculating the composite image

can be dynamically changed during a course of said online meeting).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at

the time the invention was made to use a layout rule for calculating the composite

image that can be dynamically changed during a course of an online meeting, as taught

by Moran et al., in the method of Van Dok et al., as modified by Digate et al., so as to

provided added flexibility in presenting the composite image to the online meeting

participants, based on the specific environment of the meeting.

Claims 12 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable

over **Kamata et al. (US Patent Publication # 5,953,050)** in view of **Digate et al. (US

Patent Application Publication # 2004/0161090 A1).**

Consider **claim 12**, Kamata et al. show and disclose an apparatus comprising at

least one of:

a calculator to calculate a customized composite image to be presented to a participant

node in an online meeting, said calculator receiving a plurality of feeds related to said

online meeting and calculating said customized composite image in accordance with a

layout rule set that defines a composite image to specifically be presented to said

participant node (Abstract that discloses a video conferencing system that generates a

composite image of the conference participants and displays the image on the receiving

terminals, customized to each participant's specification (layout based rules); Figs. 3

and 7 that show different components of the system for image reduction, composite image creation, and image display units, etc.; column 1, lines 56-65 disclose multiple CODECs being used to calculate sizes for different image components of the composite image; Fig. 8 that shows a sample composite image for a select participant's specifications; column 1, lines 21-35 disclose an example of customization of the composite image based on participant # 6 being the speaker; column 2, lines 31-41 disclose some additional rules used during creation of the composite image).

However, Kamata et al. do not specifically disclose a graphical user interface to allow a participant node in an online meeting to provide a layout rule set for a customized composite image of said online meeting that is to be seen at said participant node; a receiver to receive a layout rule set that defines a customized composite image to be presented to a participant node in an online meeting, and that the composite image is calculated in accordance with a layout rule.

In the same field of endeavor, Digate et al. disclose the claimed apparatus, including a graphical user interface to allow a participant node in an online meeting to provide a layout rule set for a customized composite image of said online meeting that is to be seen at said participant node (Fig. 4 that shows different steps in setting up a user's (participant node) request for a real time (online) meeting, including various criteria (comprising a layout rule) for selecting group participants that affect the customized composite image to be presented to the requesting user; paragraphs 0045-0052 describe the process in more details, including using a graphical user interface for communicating participants inputs to the system);

a receiver to receive a layout rule set that defines a customized composite image to be presented to a participant node in an online meeting, and disclosing a layout rule for calculating a composite image (Abstract that discloses a rules-based real-time messaging system that includes a rules engine, which uses a layout rule to control the delivery of messages to users; Figs. 2, 7 and 9 show the relevant details of the disclosed method; paragraph 0040 which discloses that the persistent database 15 (shown in Fig. 2) includes configuration data (interpreted to correspond to layout rules reflecting user preferences and group definitions) related to the delivery of messages to the participants; paragraphs 0062-0063 and 0102 disclose the same details).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include a graphical user interface to allow a participant node in an online meeting to provide a layout rule set for a customized composite image of said online meeting that is to be seen at said participant node; a receiver to receive a layout rule set that defines a customized composite image to be presented to a participant node in an online meeting, and disclosing a layout rule for calculating a composite image, as taught by Digate et al., in the apparatus of Kamata et al., so that the composite image of an online meeting can be presented to the participants based on the layout rules customized to each participant's preferences and configuration.

Consider **claim 13**, Kamata et al. show and disclose a system comprising:

a first participant node (Fig. 1, that shows a number of Video Conferencing Terminals 1;

column 1, lines 21-27 which disclose the same details);

at least one of a second participant node and a data feed node (Fig. 1, that shows a number of Video Conferencing Terminals 1; column 1, lines 21-27 which disclose the same details; column 2, lines 38-41 which disclose that each terminal is allowed to select an image from a terminal other than the speaking end, thereby disclosing a data feed node); and

a network interconnecting said first participant node to said at least one of a second participant node and a data feed, said network thereby providing an online meeting including said first participant node (Fig. 1, ISDN Network 2 that interconnects the terminals, including a second participant node and a data feed, with Multi-Location Video Conferencing Control Unit (MCU) 3 and Multi-Image Combiner 4; Abstract which discloses that the system provides support for an online meeting for the terminals participating in the meeting),

wherein said first participant node receives a customized composite image of said online meeting to be presented specifically to said first participant node (Abstract and column 1, lines 21-27 which further disclose that the system allows each participant to watch other participants he or she wants to watch in a desired array of a composite image (example shown in Fig. 2A); Fig. 3 shows a multiplicity of CODECs and other computational hardware to form the composite image displayed on the participants' terminals).

However, Kamata et al. do not specifically disclose that the composite image is calculated in accordance with a layout rule.

In the same field of endeavor, Digate et al. disclose the claimed system, including disclosing a layout rule for calculating a composite image (Abstract that discloses a rules-based real-time messaging system that includes a rules engine, which uses a layout rule to control the delivery of messages to users; Figs. 2, 7 and 9 show the relevant details of the disclosed method; paragraph 0040 which discloses that the persistent database 15 (shown in Fig. 2) includes configuration data (interpreted to correspond to layout rules reflecting user preferences and group definitions) related to the delivery of messages to the participants; paragraphs 0062-0063 and 0102 disclose the same details).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to use a layout rule to define a composite image of an online meeting that can be customized for at least one participant node in said online meeting, as taught by Digate et al., in the system of Kamata et al., so that the composite image of an online meeting can be presented to the participants based on the layout rules customized to each participant's preferences and configuration.

Conclusion

Any response to this Office Action should be **faxed to** (571) 273-8300 **or mailed to:**

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Art Unit: 2143

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Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Kishin G. Belani whose telephone number is (571) 270-1768. The Examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday from 6:30 am to 5:00 pm.

If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's supervisor, Nathan Flynn can be reached on (571) 272-1915. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (571) 273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free) or 703-305-3028.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist/customer service whose telephone number is (571) 272-0800.

Kishin G. Belani

K.G.B./kgb

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